

contenidos


Thames and Hudson

RICHARD SWIGG Ian Gregor (Editor) : Reading the Victorian Novel : Detail into Fiction
 BLES DAVIDSON Margaret Digby : The Little Nut Tree

their own conclusions and make their own inferences. After all, *The Prelude* is not "straight" autobiography—it there is such a thing as we learned from Proust that the distinction between memory and

shorter poems? It is at this Smock-
alley that Wordsworth's *poetry* is
finer. *W* and his successors had
retired to Stratford to make an
inventory of the poems he would
need to write them—and then not
written them.

And what was the result? A
corrosive, indeterminate one, it seems
to me. It is a memory of a
document, invaluable to students of
Wordsworth's life, and to the
historian of English thought and
sensibility at the period of the
French Revolution and its after-
math. But it is not a poem, or
a discourse, like a great poetic

Regulars of the later volumes have
usually felt a slackening in the
poetry between Books I and II, and
Wordsworth moves from meditation
to the collision of meditation with
experience, to "convivial" edu-
cescence.² But there is no such
falling-off in the 1799 version. The
first two parts are a single unified
poem, and the first part is a single
poem: "The additional lines at Pax-
ton are not merely good poetry, they
are the basis of a continuing dis-
cussion . . . 1799 is more tightly
constructed (to 1805, and has a
stronger sense of bird and bird
growth of imagination).

And whereas heavier than his
friends could weigh,
An ordinary sight; hot I thought
of him as he spread his wings;
Colours and words that are unknown
to me
To paint the visionary dreaminess
Which, while it looked all round for
my lost guide,
Did at that time invest the naked
poet,
The haecan on the lonely couch,
The woman and her garments, rozed
and tussled
By the strong wind
The shere Jonathan Wordsworth's
"frankness" was this bold one
find myself peering at it as if some
great painting, Vermeer's
"View of Delft" for example, puzzled,
even awed, by the Wordsworth feeling
that helps, by the depth of his
story, and conveyed by such simple
means.

funder was thinking of *The Excursion*,
but some of those readers
who have spent his weeks in
The Prelude alone. Macaulay, who
lived long enough to read *The Pre-
lude*, actually preferred *The Excurs-
ion*. But his foulmouth on both
was unavailing against the force of
the old story. There are the old
captures about mounbins and
catastrophes; the pit filmly philosophy
about the effect of scenery on the
mind; the old errors, old errors, old
physics; the ancient wildernesses of
dull, flat, wroctic twaddle. . . .
Other nineteenth-century readers,
like Matthew Arnold, were of course
more sympathetic to the
Wordsworthian message. But
Arnold, a very influential critic, de-
clared in 1875 that "The Excursion
and The Prelude" are by far "the
greatest bulk of his best means"
Wordsworth's "best work". And
work is his shorter pieces. And

By W. W. Robson

Bring it back down on the thundery steel table for a refill.

Peter Redgrove

